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AUTHOR Stoker, Barbara; Tubb, Gary W.
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ABSTRACT

A study was done on teachers, professors of education, and preservice teachers in order to investigate the process of measuring attitudes and to denote the level of attitudes held by these educators about the free enterprise system. The study used a semantic differential to determine the attitudes of 28 subjects toward selected economic concepts representing business, government, and labor. Overall the three levels of subjects had low to medium evaluative scores (denoting feelings and judgments concerning concepts), but higher activity ratings (denoting that certain economic elements were felt to be very strong and active within the economic system). One can conclude that attitudes of educators are transferred through subject matter as well as displayed in the classroom. (DS)

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TITLE: Attitudes of Educators Toward the Free Enterprise System*

AUTHORS: Barbara Stoker, Social Studies, Southwood H. S., Shreveport, LA.
Gary W. Tubb, Northwestern State University

ABSTRACT

The Louisiana Legislature mandated a course in Free Enterprise into the High School curriculum because of numerous public polls which yielded negative attitudes and various misconceptions about the economic system of America. A study was done on teachers, professors of education, and preservice teachers in order to investigate the process of measuring attitudes and to denote the level of attitudes held by these educators about the Free Enterprise system.

From the results of the study, one can conclude that the attitudes of these educators are not only displayed in the classroom but transferred through subject matter being taught and conceptual explanations involving the Free Enterprise system. Ref: 15.

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ATTITUDES OF EDUCATORS TOWARD THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM

America is concerned for individual freedom and the possibility of all citizens having the opportunity and skills to pursue individual goals (Tanner, 1972). In order to accomplish these personal goals, the American society is committed to preserving economic freedom (Duff, 1978). Therefore, "Education for Life" has been generally adopted as a major goal by the public system. The overall objective of this philosophy is the preparation of today's youth for the complicated world of tomorrow (Tanner, 1972).

Americans believe that students should be economically literate so they will have the knowledge to make personal and societal economic decisions (Jelly, 1968; Hopkins, 1976). Ironically one of the neglected areas in high school curriculum in the American educational system is the orientation to the Free Enterprise system through a basic economics course (McKenzie, 1977; Butler, Henry, and Musick, 1977; Rodriguez, 1976).

The American public as a whole has a poor attitude and little basic understanding of the complicated economic system which has provided the high standard of living and freedom of today in America (Frandino and Duffy, 1976; Edwards, 1976; Petrof and McDavid, 1970; McWilliams and Plotkin, 1976). Educators generally believe that the gaining of new knowledge about a given subject facilitates understanding which utimately will alter attitudes and beliefs (Hopkins, 1976; Eagly and Warren, 1976).

In response to the prevailing negative attitude and little understanding of the American Economic system, the Louisiana legislature has enacted a measure titled The Free Enterprise Act 83. Specifically defined Free Enterprise is

> . . . an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods by investments that are determined by private decisions rather than state control and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined a free manner (Act 83, 1976).

Act 83 further states that instruction of this subject "shall emphasize the positive values of profit and competition in a free economy and the enhancement of the worth and dignity of the individual under such a system (Act 83, 1976)."

Sample

A study using a semantic differential was conducted to determine the attitudes of twenty-eight subjects toward selected economic concepts which pertain to the economic system of America. The twenty-eight subjects were composed of the following three levels of educators: professors of teacher preparation, elementary secondary teachers and pre-service teachers.

Instrumentation

The instrument utilized in this study was a semantic differential. Osgood and associates developed the semantic differential as a device for measuring meanings that are given

to words in a language. The semantic differential measures the dimensions of meaning that are associated with a concept. With regards to an attitude measure of economics there is no prepared semantic differential (SD), i.e., paired bipolar adjectives with specific concepts that represent econ[illegible]. The SD consists of the following characteristics:

(1) X number of concepts.

(2) X number of bipolar adjectives to represent the evaluative, potency, and activity factors.

The first step and most crucial in constructing a semantic differential for this study was the choosing of concepts. These concepts had to be relevant to the research problem. Two requirements for selection and use of concepts were necessary: first, the concepts should bring forth a variety of responses and second, cover some extent the semantic space.

The concepts chosen for this study represented the free enterprise system. Nine concepts were grouped into three areas: business oriented, government centered and labor based. Business oriented concepts included the individual concepts of corporation, profit and business executives. Wage controls, price controls and government regulation were those concepts that represent government. To represent the overall concept of labor the individual concepts used were strike, union leaders, and unions.

The second step was to select the appropriate

adjective pairs. Adjective pairs possessed factor representativeness, (evaluative, potency, activity) and relevance to the concepts that were used. For this study six evaluative, three potency, three activity, along with three placebo adjectives made up the fifteen bipolar adjective scale. Six evaluative adjectives selected were as follows: good-bad, kind-cruel clean-dirty, beautiful-ugly, positive-negative, and healthy-sick. Potency adjectives used were hard-soft, strong-weak, large-small along with activity adjectives of active-passive, fast-slow, and complex-simple. Three additional pairs of adjectives representing receptivity, aggressiveness and one placebo pair were also included. The receptivity adjective pair was interesting-boring, with agressive-defensive representing the aggressive factor. An unassigned pair of adjectives, thrifty-generous, was used to obscure any pattern that might be evident in the adjective pairs on the rating scale.

Each concept appeared on separate sheets with the same set of bipolar adjectives. Adjectives were placed in random order for each concept and/or reversed at random. This reversal and change of order required the subject to concentrate more closely to the task at hand. The subjects were asked to rate concepts by checking along the continuum of the rating scale that best represented their attitudes about each concept. (See Figure 1.)

The rating scale used for this study was seven-point scale. The higher number, seven, was assigned to the

Figure 1

The following evaluation device is known as a semantic differential. You will note that there are pairs of adjectives with a line between. You are to think of the concept listed below that is to be evaluated, and mark your opinion of that concept on the line between the pairs of adjectives. For example, if the pairs were:

Large : : : : : : : : Small

You should place an X on the line in the position representing your opinion of the concept on that pair of adjectives. If you think the concept to be very large, place your X close to Large. If you think of the concept in terms of being very small, place your X near Small. If you think of the concept in more moderate terms, place your X somewhere inbetween.

Work as rapidly as possible. Your first impression is probably most accurate.

THE CONCEPT TO BE EVALUATED IS: GOVERNMENT

Good	: : : : : : : :	Bad
Interesting	: : : : : : : :	Boring
Cruel	: : : : : : : :	Kind
Agressive	: : : : : : : :	Defensive
Dirty	: : : : : : : :	Clean
Hard	: : : : : : : :	Soft
Strong	: : : : : : : :	Weak
Small	: : : : : : : :	Large
Beautiful	: : : : : : : :	Ugly
Thrifty	: : : : : : : :	Generous
Positive	: : : : : : : :	Negative
Sick	: : : : : : : :	Healthy
Active	: : : : : : : :	Passive
Slow	: : : : : : : :	Fast
Complex	: : : : : : : :	Simple

more positive adjective of the bipolar pair. The lowest rating, one, was the most negative with four being neutral.

For this paper averages were computed of the responses of the three level of subjects in regard to the three groups of concepts and to their respective factors which measured evaluative, potency, and activity domains.

Analysis of Data

Bar graphs of attitude mean scores were constructed for each group: professors of education, teachers, and pre-service teachers. (See Figures 2, 3, 4, respectively.) These graphs pictorially represent the mean scores for the concepts of business, government, and labor in respect to the evaluative, potency, and activity factors. All three levels of educators, without exception, evaluated all the economic concepts lower than the potency and activity factors. Another general agreement was noted about unions by the very low evaluative averages in contrast to the extremely high activity means and the even higher potency averages. For the most part the three economic concepts had lower evaluative averages than the activity and potency means. In conclusion, educators moderately judge the economic elements of business, government, and labor. However, these same educators indicated by their rankings that these same elements were quite strong and very active in the economy.

Line graphs were constructed to visually compare the groups' ratings on the evaluative, potency, and activity adjectives of each major concept area. (See Figures 5 and 6.) The

Figure 2

ATTITUDE MEAN SCORES OF PROFESSORS OF TEACHERS TOWARD ECONOMIC CONCEPTS SEPARATED INTO SEMANTIC FACTORS

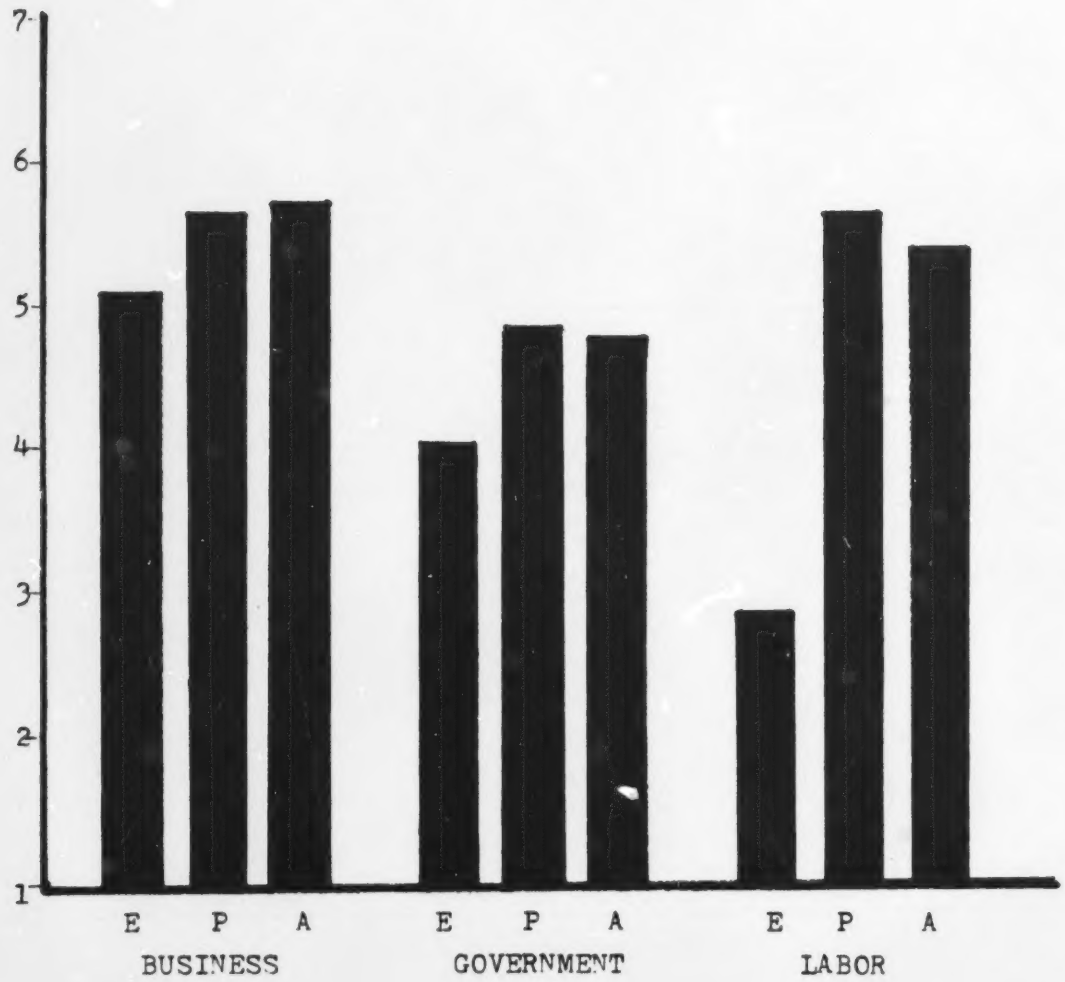


Figure 3

ATTITUDE MEAN SCORES OF TEACHERS TOWARD ECONOMIC CONCEPTS SEPARATED INTO SEMANTIC FACTORS

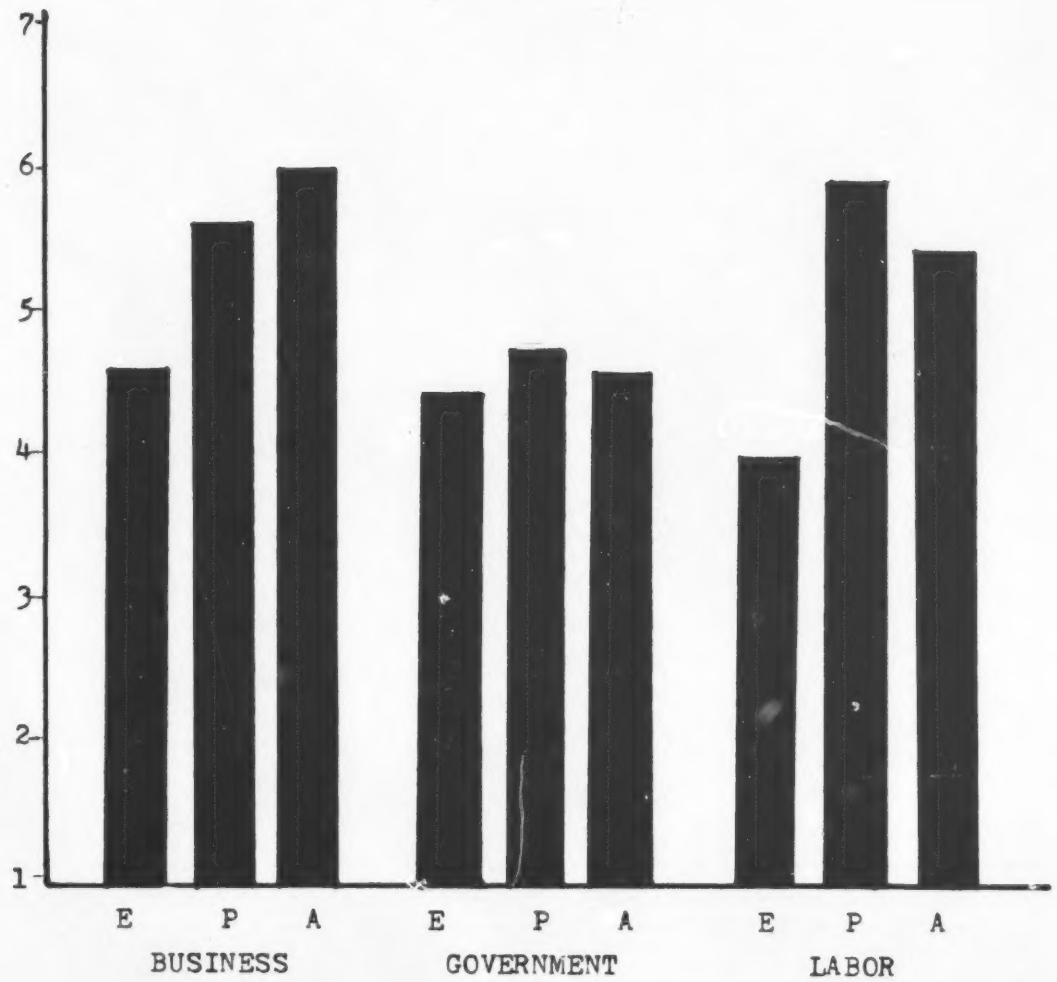


Figure 4

ATTITUDE MEAN SCORES OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS TOWARD ECONOMIC CONCEPTS SEPARATED INTO SEMANTIC FACTORS

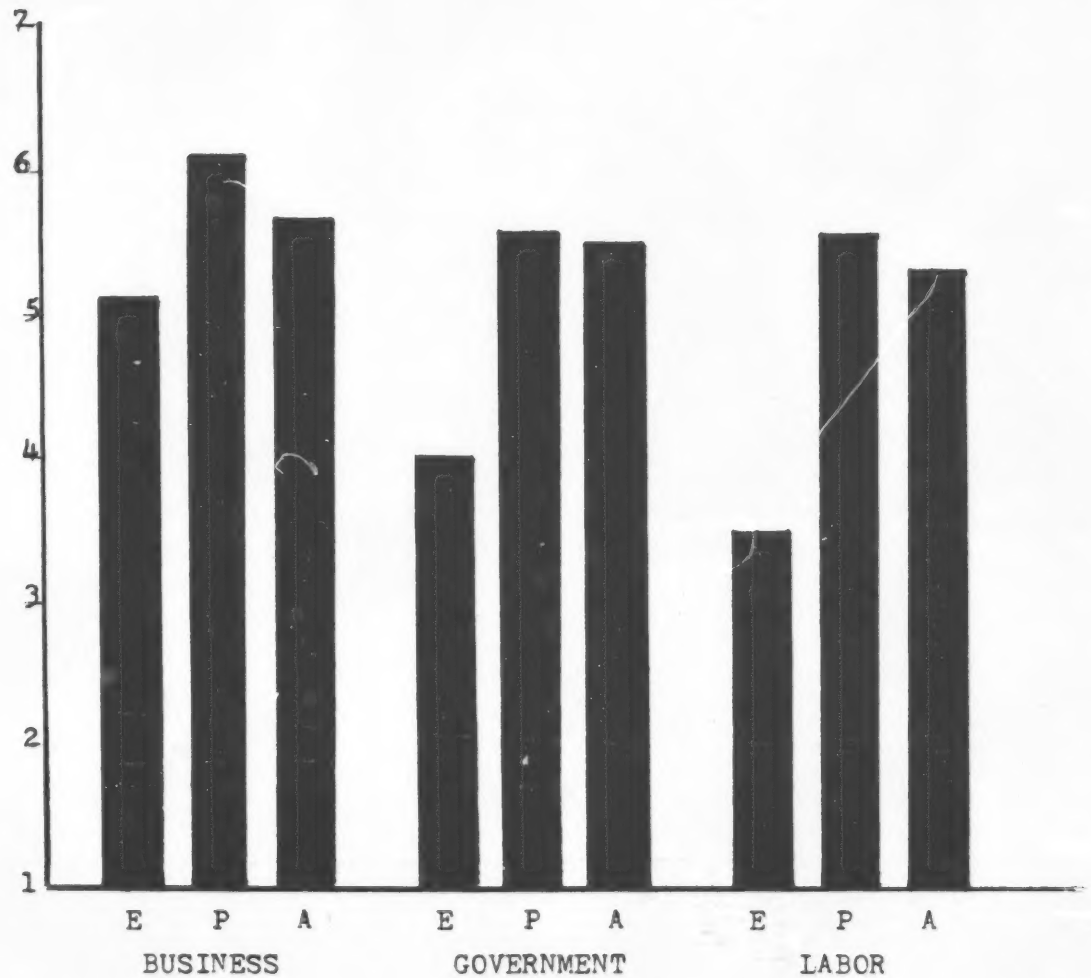
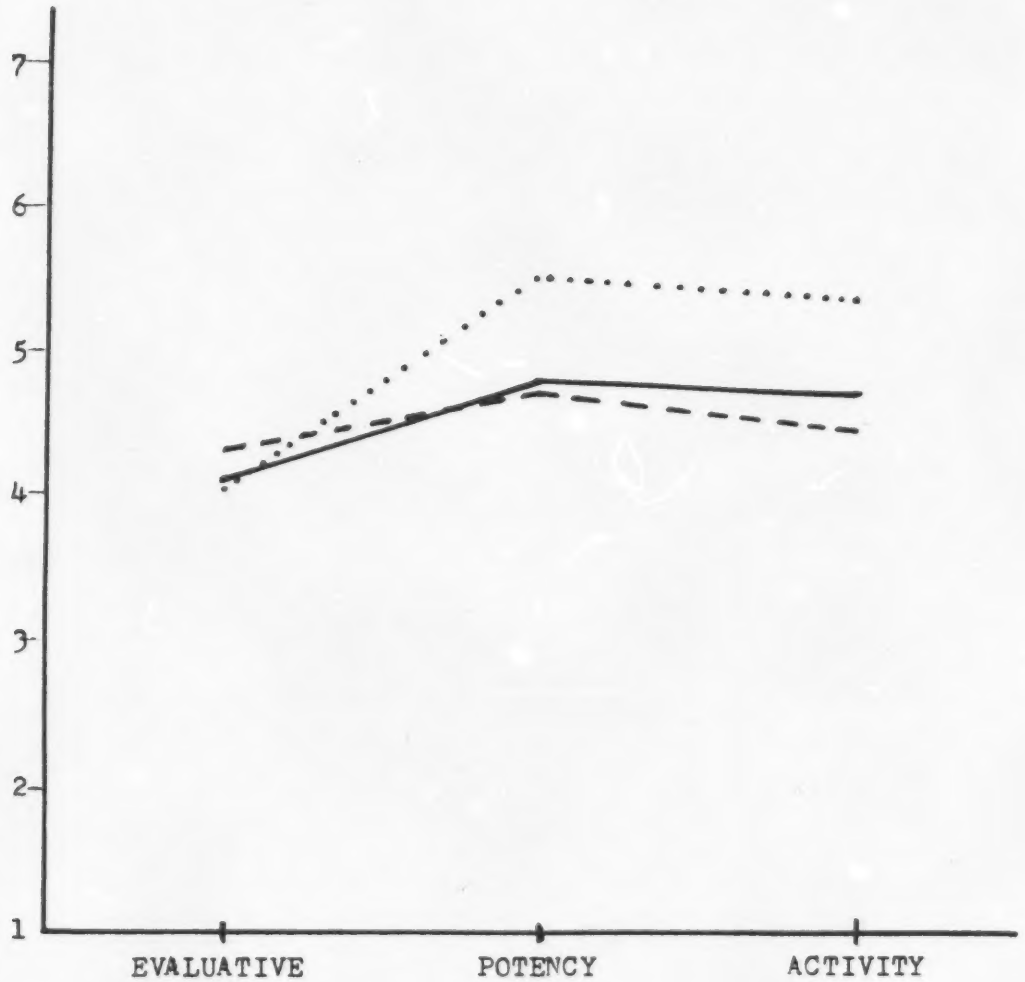


Figure 5

MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS ON EVALUATIVE, ACTIVITY AND POTENCY FACTORS TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT CONCEPT



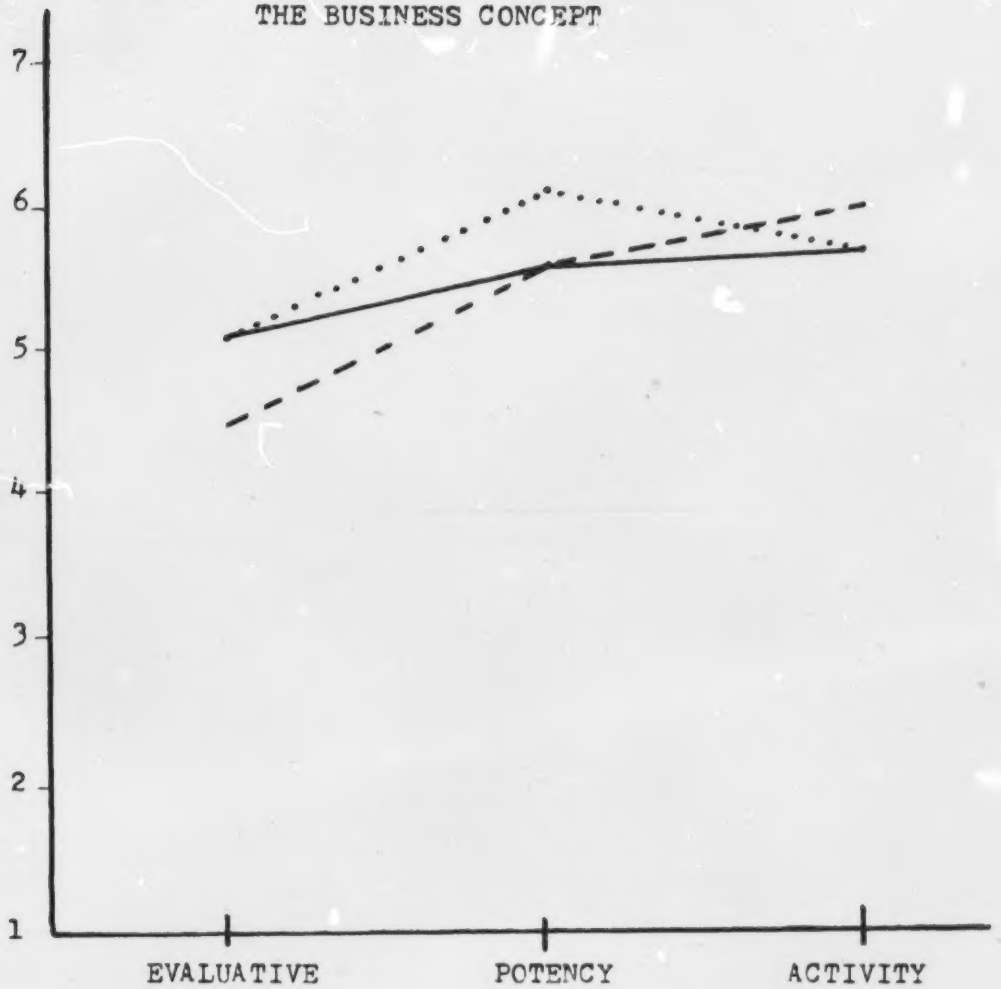
Preservice teachers .....

Teachers – – – – –

Professors of teacher preparation ————

Figure 6

MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS ON EVALUATIVE, ACTIVITY AND POTENCY FACTORS TOWARD THE BUSINESS CONCEPT



Preservice teachers .....

Teachers - - - - -

Professors of teacher preparation ————

three levels of educators were in close agreement when they indicated their attitude toward the concept of labor; very low evaluation scores with high activity and potency ratings. (See Figure 7.) The preservice teachers thought both concepts, business and government, were far more potent than the teachers and professors. In conclusion the three levels of educators generally held similar opinions about the economic concepts of business, government, and labor.

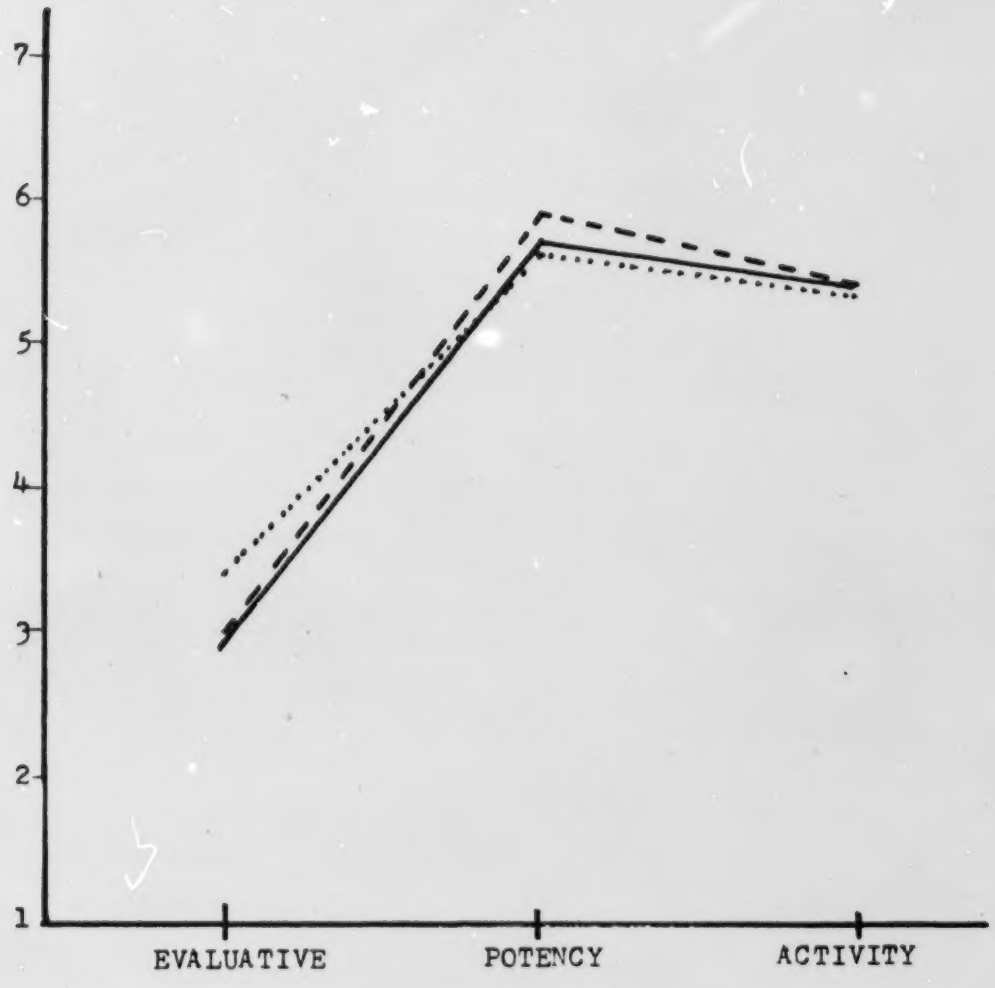
Semantic space graphs were developed to visually present the description of the economic concept meanings geometrically, spatially, and quantitative. Each level of educator for each concept measured is placed graphically according to that group's average score. Each concept evaluated covered a small amount of semantic space. (See Figures 8, 9, and 10.) The business concept along with government and labor concepts were situated in the positive quadrant.

The results of a three-way analysis of variance is presented on Table 1. The ANOVA consisted of the following: (a) the level of subjects, professors of teacher preparation, teachers, and preservice teachers; (b) the concepts of business, government and labor; and (c) the factors which represented the evaluative, potency, and activity dimensions.

Three areas had significant differences: (a) concepts, (b) factors, and (c) the interaction of concepts and and factors. Two of the three economic concepts, government and labor, had similar ratings. The concept business was

Figure 7

MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS ON EVALUATIVE, ACTIVITY AND POTENCY FACTORS TOWARD THE LABOR CONCEPT



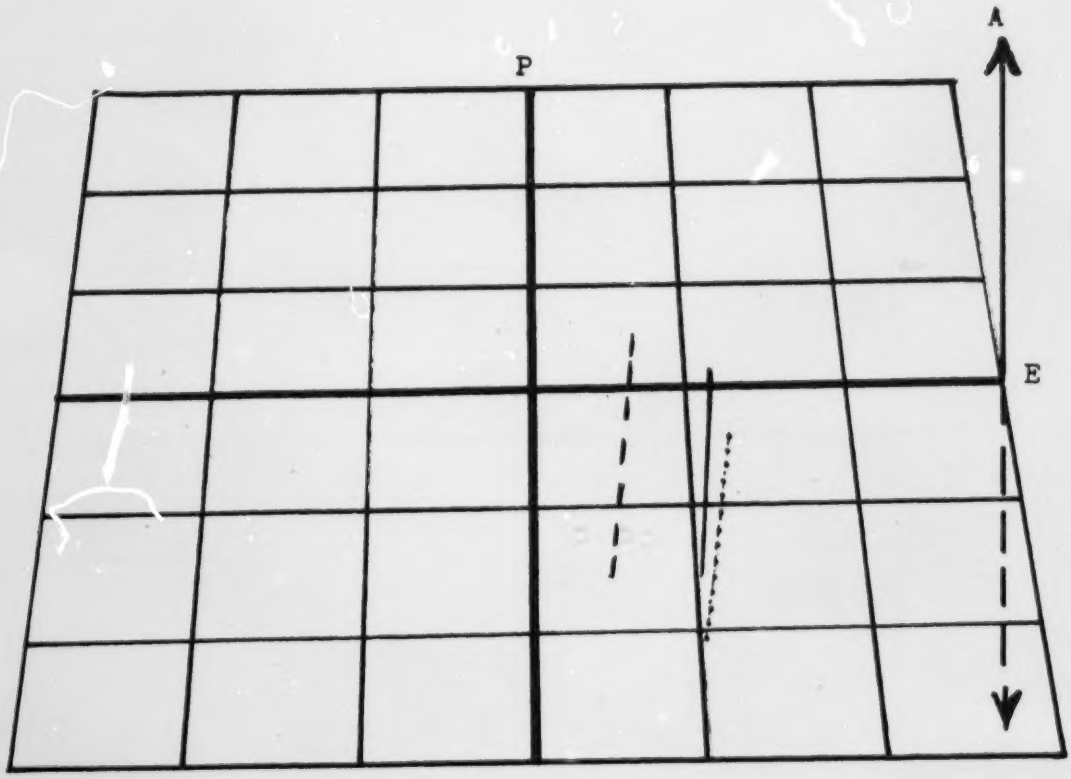
Preservice teachers.....

Teachers - - - - - -

Professors of teacher preparation ————

Figure 8

SEMANTIC SPACE GRAPH OF MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS TOWARD THE BUSINESS CONCEPT



E = Evaluative Factor
P = Potency Factor
A = Activity Factor

Preservice teachers.....
Teachers — — — —
Professors ————

Figure 9

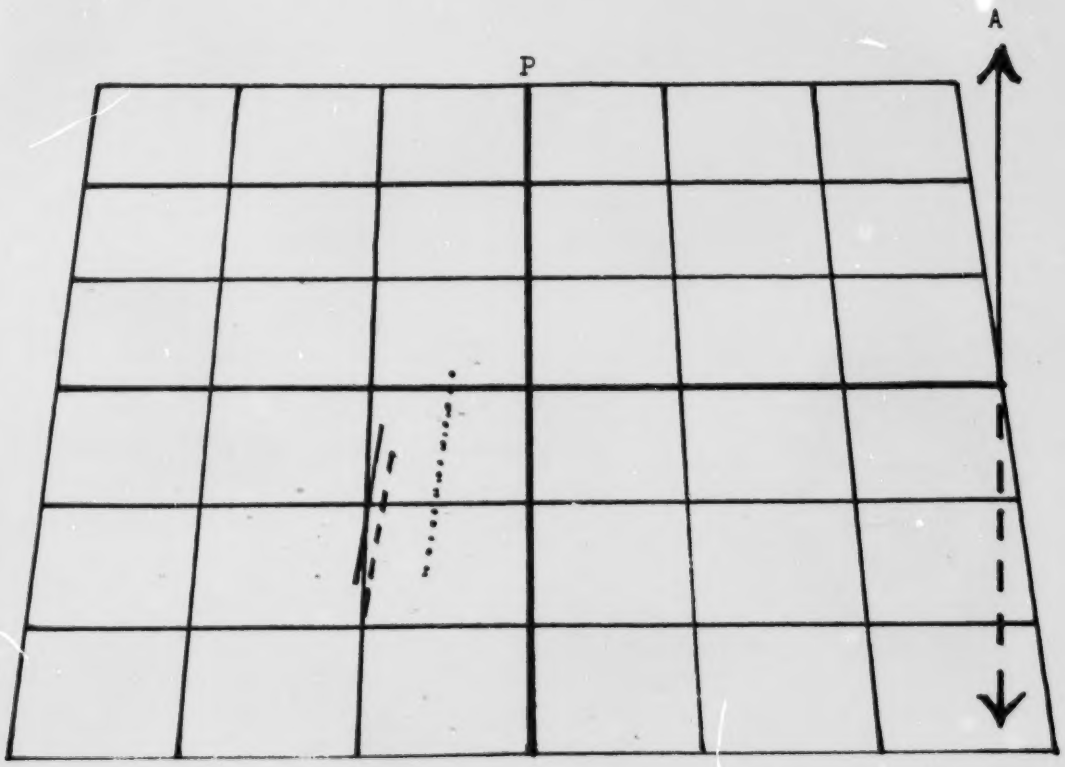
SEMANTIC SPACE GRAPH OF MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT CONCEPT

E = Evaluative Factor
P = Potency Factor
A = Activity Factor

Preservice teachers.....
Teachers - - - - - -
Professors———

Figure 10

SEMANTIC SPACE GRAPH OF MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES BY SUBJECTS TOWARD THE LABOR CONCEPT



E = Evaluative Factor
P = Potency Factor
A = Activity Factor

Preservice teachers.....
Teachers- - - - -
Professors ————

Table 1

ANOVA

SOURCE	MS	D.F.	F-RATIO	P
A - EDUCATORS	1.570	2	1.2929	0.1012
B - CONCEPTS	16.626	2	24.2873	0.0001**
C - FACTORS	53.565	2	78.2477	0.0001**
AB	0.517	4	0.7555	0.5576
AC	0.132	4	0.1934	0.9397
BC--CONCEPTS/FACTORS	8.437	4	12.3247	0.0001**
ABC	0.954	8	1.3942	0.1993
Within	0.685	225		

** Significant beyond .01.

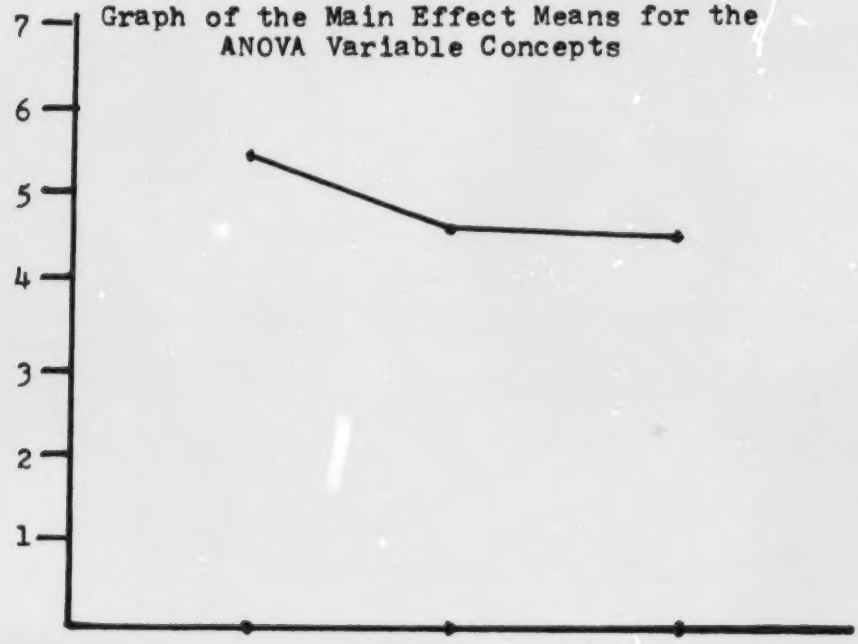
rated much higher than government and labor across all levels of teachers and factors. Therefore the difference of this higher rating resulted in a significant difference. (See Figure 11.) The factors of potency and activity both had highly similar ratings. In contrast, the evaluative factor (See Figure 12) had a much lower score which was the cause of significant difference among factors across all levels of teachers and concepts. Significant interaction between concepts and factors resulted when the labor concept was rated highly on the potency factor. (See Figure 13.) This results in the labor concept being greater than expected when compared to the government concept rating, threfore interaction developed.

Discussion

Overall the three levels of subjects had low to medium evaluative scores on selected economic concepts that represented business, government and labor. An evaluative score denotes how one feels or judges some concept. In contrast these same concepts brought forth much higher potency and activity ratings from the subjects. These subjects felt that certain economic elements were very strong and active within the economic system of America.

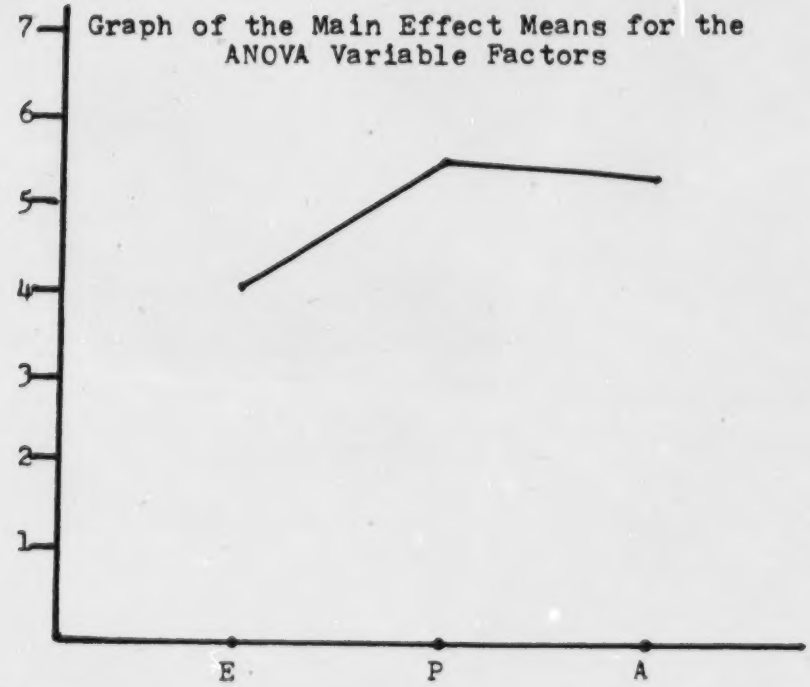
The subjects of the study were educators having direct contact with students/teachers in public schools. One can conclude that the attitudes of these educators are not

Figure 11



B=Business
G=Government
L=Labor

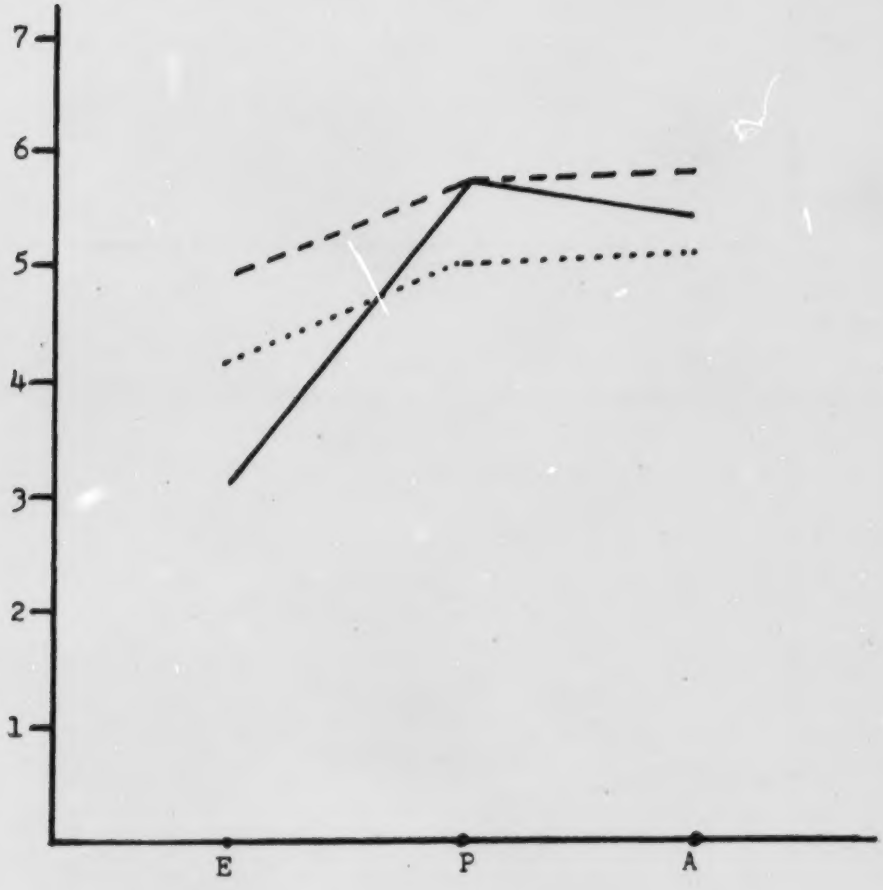
Figure 12



E=Evaluative
P=Potency
A=Activity

Figure 13

Graph of Interaction Means for the
ANOVA Variables-Concepts and Factors



E = Evaluative
P = Potency
A = Activity

Business - - - - - -
Government .....
Labor ———

only displayed in the classroom but transferred through subject matter being taught and conceptual explanations involving the free enterprise system.

One might ask which attitude would be most beneficial in keeping our economy strong and viable:

(a) High evaluation - low potency and low activity?

(b) Low evaluation - high potency and high activity?

(c) High evaluation, high potency and high activity?

To keep the economy secure within the democratic way of life we should have a positive opinion in judging a potent and active free enterprise system.

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